

Greetings are extended from myself to all in attendance of the Virtual 2021-'22 VISNA BIENNIAL CONVENTION & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT event. The pleasure and privilege is mine to extend heartfelt congratulations from The (St.Croix District) Hospital's Governing Board of Directors to the executive leadership and membership of the Virgin Islands State Nurses Association on the planning and execution of this event.

The great English philosopher and mathematician Alfred Whitehead offers us this perspective, "No one who achieves success does so without acknowledging the help of others. The wise and confident acknowledge this help with gratitude." There is strength in collective focus. There is strength in the camaraderie that offers unwavering support and empathy when times are difficult. I offer gratitude to the trailblazing nurses in our region, many who are present here today and the others who after a lifetime of sacrifice to their communities have laid down their earthly tasks. Admonition is also given to the burgeoning members of our association, who will carry the banner of this association forward to the future. The times in which we exist can be described as no less than tumultuous. What are we doing to support and grow not only for ourselves but for the person next to us, inclusive of the neighbor down the street or a fellow human two continents away.

Don't exist like the four not so wise people named Everybody, Somebody, Anybody and Nobody. There was an important job to be done and Everybody was sure that Somebody would do it. Anybody could have done it, but Nobody did it. Somebody got angry about that, because it was Everybody's job. Everybody thought Anybody could do it, but Nobody realized that Everybody wouldn't do it. It ended up that Everybody blamed Somebody when Nobody did what Anybody could have!

The theme for this year's convention reflects the mandate that in essence, we are each other's keeper or simply put, to care for each other. The question is asked again, "Exactly what does keeping or caring for others look like??"

I found this concept in my reading recently, a possible answer to the query of deciding how and to whom we provide care. And I quote, "{Abraham} Lincoln reminds us that our constitutional rights are not free of obligations or responsibilities. Regardless of the Supreme Court's decision, our public health efforts and response are currently thwarted by a disparity in how we think and talk about our obligations and responsibilities to each other. Fixing that can't be legislated. The evolution of human civilization demonstrates that a group's likelihood of success in response to an existential threat is directly connected to the ability to balance personal liberty and moral duty to take care of one another. Maintaining a civil society in those circumstances requires universal

acceptance that the "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" we cherish be attuned with service, empathy, and gratitude."

A great example is the ongoing vehement, debate re vaccine mandate enacted not only in the territory but nationwide and again in some degree on a global scale. No matter which side of the issue you reside, the core remains that compassion, consideration, care are facets of human existence that can't be legislated, and to some degree cannot be taught.

Our practice should be infused with empathy not only for the patients or clients we care for but for our fellow caregivers and most importantly, ourselves. Territory wide we face issues of increasing violence, decreasing and/or misappropriated resources for health care, a post hurricane recovery that has now entered its fourth year, flux of hospital executives, a never before experienced global pandemic, angst, anxiety and political uncertainty never experienced before in our lifetime. Some may wonder if there's any end in sight. It truly is easy to become overwhelmed, disillusioned and distracted from the mission. The environments in which many of us provide care is increasingly stressful due to environment of care issues and other conundrums not easily resolved. We must take the coveted time to renew, refresh, and refocus ourselves before we can instill or infuse into others. Find simple ways to acknowledge and express your caring not forgetting self care. You cannot pour from an empty vessel. "Compassion fatigue" is not just the new buzzword but describes what "caregiver burnout" looks like. The toughest soldiers who are bearing much sometimes do not offer insight into what they are actually experiencing. Be kind. Even to those who have a different viewpoint than yourself. Never dismiss the importance of not just hearing but listening. To everyone, stay safe, be kind, live in and endeavor to always extend a similitude of grace.

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